

VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers constitute an important community resource for many public libraries. When a program is developed, it should be with the understanding that the use of qualified volunteers in a library program is a supplement to, not a substitute for, paid staff.

Volunteers usually come to the library on an individual basis and participate in ongoing work or special projects within the library setting. Their tasks should be of genuine significance and should enhance the services and capabilities of the library. Volunteers can be advocates for the library within the community.

Libraries should not undertake a volunteer program unless the library board and the director are committed to the concept and are willing to devote the necessary time to develop a program that is well managed and will benefit the library.

Successful volunteer programs are:

- Planned and approved by the staff and board
- Based on written policy
- Managed under sound personnel practices—training, evaluation, and development are important to volunteers
- Clear about job descriptions, the status of the volunteer, supervision, expectations as to work schedule, and consistent service
- Clear about policies concerning insurance, use of library vehicles, and paid expenses
- Cognizant of the need to recognize and show appreciation for volunteer work
- Realistic in expectations of hours donated, types of work to be done, and the training required
- Open to the community, in an effort to utilize the skills and talents of people who can contribute to the enhancement of library service

Has the board adopted a policy for volunteers?

Are there procedures in place for managing the volunteer program?